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Educated opinion in III CTZ appears to consider Thieu and Ky best able to control the Army and to get along well with the Americans. It seems, however, that most respondents, even of the Government slate, view Thieu and Ky as accep-

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TO: DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF STATE
FROM: SAIGON 2943
SUBJECT: ELECTIONS
PRIORITY 4459

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GENERAL FOR POLAD

1. EMBOFFS LUNCED AUG 11 WITH NGUYEN DINH XUNONG OF THE SPECIAL COMMISSARIAT FOR ADMINISTRATION AND REHEARSED WITH HIM SVN PROGRESS IN ORGANIZAING ELECTION.

2. XUNONG SAID HE HAD BEEN WORKING VERY HARD LAST FEW DAYS IN AN EFFORT TO GET THE BALLOTS FLOWING INTO THE PROVINCES. HE SAID HE HAD APPROXIMATELY THREE HUNDRED PEOPLE WORKING ON ELECTION MECHANICS IN SAIGON AND THAT HE HAD ENGAGED TWO WAREHOUSES TO HOLD THE BALLOTS UNTIL THEY CAN BE MOVED

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INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE. HE ESTIMATED THAT BETWEEN NOW AND ELEC-
TION DAY THE WOULD MOVE CLOSE TO A THOUSAND TONS OF PAPER.
HE SAID HE HAD BEEN UP UNTIL MIDNIGHT PREVIOUS NIGHT SUPERVIS-
ING THE LOADING OF BALLOTS IN SHIPS BOUND FOR CENTRAL VIET-
NAM. DESPITE THE VOLUME, HE FEELS CONFIDENT THAT HIS OFFICE
WILL HAVE THE NECESSARY BALLOTS AND ENVELOPES AT THE POLLING
PLACES ON ELECTION DAY.

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REVIEWED BY Ivan J. Gubey DATE 10/6/81

RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. _____ REASON(S)
ENDCRSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☒ RELASABLE ☐

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Educated opinion in III CTZ appears to consider Thieu and Ky best able to control the Army and to get along well with the Americans. It seems, however, that most respondents, even supporters of the Government slate, view Thieu and Ky as acceptable only for the present time, and not as "ideal" leaders. Some respondents note that the Thieu-Ky relationship is fragile, and question whether Ky will long be able to endure the junior role.

There remains considerable hope that any elected government, having an image of legitimacy, will be able to prosecute the war more effectively and, more importantly, will be in a better position to make an honorable peace. It seems -- although this judgement requires a certain amount of reading between the lines -- that a significant body of opinion feels that a Huong or perhaps, Suu government would be more "compatible with Vietnamese character" than the military ticket. If such a civilian ticket were elected, it is hinted, North Viet-Nam would be more likely to agree to peace talks.

There is little indication that "the American presence" has much potential as a campaign issue in III CTZ, outside of the Bien Hoa metropolitan area and, possibly, Vung Tau.

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3. AS USUAL, XUNONG COMMENTED RATHER FREELY ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE ELECTIONS. WHEN ASKED FOR HIS PREDICTION OF WHO WOULD WIN, HE REFLECTED FOR A MOMENT, THEN OPINED THAT THIEU AND KY SEEMED CERTAIN WINNERS, ADDING THAT THEY WOULD NOT NEED ANY RIGGING TO ASSURE THEIR VICTORY. CURIOUSLY ENOUGH, HE ADDED THERE WAS SOME UNEASINESS IN THE MILITARY CAMP ABOUT THE CERTAINTY OF A THIEU-KY VICTORY AND HE CITED A RECENT DINNER CONVERSATION WITH COLONEL HO VAN LOI, J-2, JGS, IN WHICH THE COLONEL HAD EXPRESSED FEAR THAT HUONG MIGHT WIN. XUONG FEELS THAT HUONG IS CERTAINLY FAR AND AWAY THE STRONGEST CIVILIAN CANDIDATE, SUPPORTED AS HE IS BY AN ENERGETIC AND TALENTED TEAM OF WORKERS BOTH IN SAIGON AND THE PROVINCES.

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INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE SOUTHERN OLD STUDENTS ASSOCIATION, BUT HE DOES NOT FEEL THAT HUONG CAN DEFEAT THIEU BECAUSE (1) THIEU AND KY ARE WELL KNOWN AND (2) THE OTHER CIVILIAN SLATES WILL CUT INTO HUONG'S VOTE.

4. XUONG SAID THAT MANY SENATORIAL CANDIDATES WOULD PROBABLY WITHDRAW IF THEY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY AND THAT, INDEED, SEVERAL HAD RECENTLY CONTACTED HIS OFFICE LOOKING INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF WITHDRAWING. UNFORTUNATELY, HE RUEFULLY ADDED, THE LAW WAS SO DRAFTED AS TO PREVENT THEIR WITHDRAWAL NOW THAT THE CAMPAIGN HAS ACTUALLY BEGUN.

5. COMMENTING ON THE LOTTERY ASPECT OF THE SENATORIAL ELECTION, XUONG DREW ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THE ODDS WERE MUCH LONGER THAN EIGHT TO ONE AGAINST THE ELECTION OF ANY ONE SLATE. THOUGHT A VOTER COULD PUT AS MANY AS SIX LISTS IN HIS ENVELOPE, THE CHANCES WERE GOOD THAT MANY VOTERS WOULD INSERT ONLY ONE, TWO OR THREE LISTS IN THE ENVELOPES. MANY ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTIES WERE IN FACT URGING THEIR FOLLOWERS TO VOTE ONLY THEIR OWN LISTS IN ORDER TO AVOID

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THE POSSIBILITY OF AIDING THE ELECTION OF RANDOM LISTS. XUONG FEELS THAT THE LOGIC OF THIS ARGUMENT WILL GAIN WIDE CURRENCY BETWEEN NOW AND ELECTION DAY. HE SAID THAT THE NOTICE POSTED IN THE POLLING PLACE WILL ADVISE THE VOTER TO DEPOSIT "AT LEAST ONE AND NO MORE THAN SIX LISTS" IN THE ENVELOPE.

6. TOWARD THE END OF THE CONVERSATION, AS IS HIS wont, XUONG RELATED CERTAIN ANECDOTES IN CONNECTION WITH THE CAMPAIGN. HE MENTIONED TRAN VAN LY'S RUNNING MATE, HUYNH CONG DUONG, AND SAID THAT DON'S WIFE WAS MOST UNHAPPY WITH HER HUSBAND'S CANDIDATURE AND HAD THREATENED TO LEAVE HIM IF HE DID NOT WITHDRAW. HE DESCRIBED DUONG AS BEING "UN PEU CINGLE".

7. XUONG ALSO MENTIONED HAVING RECEIVED SOME TELEGRAMS OF PROTEST DURING LAST FEW DAYS FROM INDIVIDUALS WHO HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED BY SOME OF LESSER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AS THEIR REPRESENTATIVES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. THESE INDIVIDUALS VIGOROUSLY DENIED HAVING GIVEN PERMISSION FOR THIS USE OF THEIR NAMES BY THE CANDIDATES.
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